



**National  
Caregiving  
Strategy**

# A National Caregiving Strategy for Canada



**Canadian Centre for  
Caregiving Excellence**

# Executive summary



# The case for a National Caregiving Strategy

## **Canada is facing a caregiving crisis at a massive scale.**

Caregivers and care providers are not sufficiently supported, and they are struggling. Our population is aging, with every year bringing more people needing care, and fewer people available to provide that care. People, including those with disabilities, are living longer and have more complex care needs, but caregivers and care providers are already stretched to a breaking point. The status quo is unsustainable and will only get worse without policy reform.

## **Caregivers are everywhere, and without them, Canada's health and social systems would collapse.**

Caregivers are the people caring for aging parents, children with disabilities, sick friends and neighbours. One in four Canadians are currently caregivers and at least half will be a caregiver at some point in their lives. Caregivers hold healthcare systems together, making sure medical directives are followed, appointments are kept and that care recipients have their needs met.

## **Caregiving is meaningful to caregivers and their loved ones, and invaluable to the Canadian economy.**

Caregivers often act out of love. Care relationships can bring families closer and lead to profound moments of connection. Caregiving is also crucial to the Canadian economy: replacing care from unpaid caregivers would cost the federal government an estimated \$97.1 billion annually.

## **Caregivers cannot continue this vital work without help.**

In CCCE's *Caring in Canada* report, 56% of caregivers providing more than five hours of care per week experienced financial stress. In the same report, half of caregivers found accessing supports difficult and 58% of caregivers reported feeling tired because of caregiving.<sup>1</sup>

## Care recipients need better financial supports to thrive and live with dignity.

In 2023, 37% of caregivers experienced financial hardship due to their care duties and half of caregivers experienced at least one financial stressor from caregiving in the past year. These supports also make caregiving possible for caregivers. Otherwise, caregivers are left trying to fill every gap—an impossible task for most.

## Canada needs more paid care providers, and they need to be treated with the respect they deserve.

Canada's care systems rely on paid care providers. These are rewarding but difficult jobs with high rates of burnout, and not enough people entering or staying in the profession. CCCE's *Caring in Canada* report showed that 80% of care providers considered leaving the field in the 12 months prior to the survey. Paid care providers need protection from abuse, adequate pay and better working conditions to carry on.

## Caregivers, care providers and care recipients all need bold leadership and immediate action.

Canada needs a strategy, and the federal government must take the lead on key issues to ensure that caregivers and care providers across Canada can thrive.



# Recommendations for a National Caregiving Strategy

The federal government committed to developing a National Caregiving Strategy in Budget 2024. Working in partnership with caregivers, care providers, experts and leaders, CCCE created this strategy with five key areas of action:

## **Improving supports, programs and services for caregivers**

So they can maintain their own well-being while fulfilling caregiving responsibilities.

## **Supporting caregivers in the workforce and education**

So they can better manage the responsibilities of providing care and their work.

## **Supporting care recipients**

So their care needs do not subject them to a lower quality of life.

## **Building a sustainable care provider workforce**

By valuing care providers with higher wages, better training and clear pathways to permanent residency for migrant carers.

## **Showing leadership and recognition**

So Canadians know caregiving is a priority, and provinces, territories, businesses, and others can follow in the federal government's footsteps.

## PILLAR ONE

### Supports, programs and services for caregivers

Caregiving takes a significant toll on caregivers' physical, mental and financial well-being: caregivers in Canada are past their breaking points, just as care needs are increasing across the country.

#### SOLUTIONS

##### Provide caregivers with financial support when and how they need it

- Make the Canada Caregiver Credit refundable
- Introduce a caregiver allowance
- Introduce public care insurance

##### Improve caregivers' well-being through targeted programs and services

- Fund tailored programs supporting caregivers' mental health and well-being
- Fund respite and home care services for caregivers

## PILLAR TWO

### Supports for caregivers in work and education

Many caregivers hold jobs in addition to their care responsibilities, and, too often, their employment conditions make it impossible to do both well. Some caregiving responsibilities take people away from paid work, either in the short term or permanently, but this comes at a great cost to their financial well-being. Balancing providing care and education is also a challenge for caregivers who are in school: they miss out on opportunities for their own growth when they are not supported in their caregiving duties.

## **SOLUTIONS**

### **Make leaves and benefits work for working caregivers**

- Make caregiver leaves and benefits more suitable and accessible

### **Provide caregivers in work and school with greater financial security**

- Introduce Canada Pension Plan (CPP) provisions for caregivers with years of low earnings due to caregiving responsibilities
- Make the federal component of student loans more flexible to meet the needs of caregivers

### **Give caregivers the flexibility to stay in the workforce as they provide care**

- Become a leading employer by implementing caregiver-friendly workplace policies
- Give federally regulated employees paid care days
- Introduce incentives for caregiver-friendly workplace policies

## **PILLAR THREE**

### **Financial supports for care recipients**

Care recipients with disabilities are too often pushed to poverty by the high costs of having a disability and the lack of support. When care recipients lack financial support and services, caregivers often try to fill the gaps. This is unsustainable in the long term.

## **SOLUTIONS**

### **Reduce administrative barriers for care recipients and their families**

- Expand Disability Tax Credit eligibility and make it more accessible
- Make improvements to the Registered Disability Savings Plan

## Increase the scale of other financial supports for care recipients

- Implement and amend the Canada Disability Benefit
- Make improvements to the Medical Expense Tax Credit

## PILLAR FOUR

### Build a sustainable care provider workforce

Care providers are essential to the lives of many care recipients; they are mission-critical members of Canada's health and social service workforce. Despite their importance, care providers are significantly undervalued. Poor working conditions and low pay drive many care providers to leave the profession. There are not enough pathways to support newcomers to Canada in doing this meaningful work.

#### SOLUTIONS

##### Value paid care providers

- Pay care providers a living wage

##### Protect and encourage migrant care providers

- Enhance protections for migrant care workers
- Improve pathways to permanent residency for migrant care workers



## PILLAR FIVE

### Leadership and recognition

Canada lacks a coordinated approach to supporting caregivers, care providers and care recipients across the country. This is a policy issue that cuts across portfolios, but the problems it poses cannot be solved by working in silos. A true coordinated strategy, with built-in advice from caregivers, is necessary to make a difference. The federal government also has an integral role in shaping healthcare across Canada and supporting military families.

#### SOLUTIONS

##### **Make caregiving a government priority**

- Develop caregiver legislation that establishes the National Caregiving Strategy and creates an Advisory Council

##### **Show federal leadership in healthcare**

- Prioritize caregiving in healthcare conversations with provinces and territories
- Direct key national research bodies to collaborate on a full research agenda on caregiving

##### **Ensure veterans and military families get the support they deserve**

- Ensure interoperability between Canadian Forces Health Services and civilian systems
- Ensure interprovincial mobility of services such as automatic eligibility for autism services
- Assign a case manager to families with complex needs with relocating to new communities
- Expand eligibility of Veterans Affairs Canada Caregiver Recognition Benefit to more families

# Read the full report

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# Endnotes

1 Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence. *Caring in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence, 2024. [https://canadiancaregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CCCE\\_Caring-in-Canada.pdf](https://canadiancaregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CCCE_Caring-in-Canada.pdf).



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# A National Caregiving Strategy for Canada 2025